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Ron DeSantis

Ronald Dion DeSantis (born September 14, 1978) is an American attorney, naval officer and politician serving as the 46th and current governor of Florida since 2019. A member of the Republican Party, he previously represented Florida's 6th congressional district in the United States House of Representatives from 2013 to 2018. After graduating from Yale University and Harvard Law School, DeSantis served as an officer and attorney in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy (JAG).

DeSantis was a candidate in Florida's 2016 U.S. Senate election, but withdrew when incumbent Senator Marco Rubio announced that he would seek reelection. DeSantis then opted to run for reelection to his U.S. House seat. An ally of President Donald Trump, DeSantis made frequent criticisms of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, urging Trump to shut down or significantly limit the investigation and "suggesting agents should have briefed the Trump campaign about their efforts to investigate certain aides."^[1]

On August 28, 2018, DeSantis won the Republican primary for the gubernatorial election. On September 10, DeSantis resigned from his seat in the House of Representatives to focus on his campaign. DeSantis was officially certified as the winner of the general election on November 20, 2018, following a machine recount, defeating Democratic nominee and Mayor of Tallahassee Andrew Gillum. At age 42, DeSantis is the youngest incumbent governor of a U.S. state.

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Ron DeSantis



46th Governor of Florida

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 8, 2019

Lieutenant Jeanette Núñez

Preceded by Rick Scott

Member of the
U.S. House of Representatives
from Florida's 6th district

In office

January 3, 2013 – September 10, 2018

Preceded by Constituency

Established

Succeeded by Michael Waltz

Personal details

Born Ronald Dion DeSantis
September 14, 1978
Jacksonville, Florida,
U.S.

Political party Republican

Spouse(s) Casey Black (m. 2010)

Children 3

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Residence	Governor's Mansion
Education	Yale University (BA) Harvard University (JD)
Military service	
Allegiance	United States
Branch/service	Navy
Years of service	2004–2010 (Active) 2010–present (Reserve)
Rank	Lieutenant Commander
Unit	Judge Advocate General's Corps
Battles/wars	Iraq War
Awards	Bronze Star Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal Global War on Terrorism Service Medal Iraq Campaign Medal

Early life and education

Ronald Dion DeSantis was born on September 14, 1978, in Jacksonville, Florida, the son of Karen (Rogers) and Ronald DeSantis.^[2] His family moved to Orlando, Florida, before relocating to Dunedin, Florida, when he was 6 years old.^[3] In 1991 he was a member of the Little League team from Dunedin National that went on from the regular season to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.^{[4][5]}

After graduating in 1997 from Dunedin High School in Dunedin, Florida, DeSantis attended Yale University, graduating with a B.A. in history in 2001.^[6] While at Yale, he was captain of the varsity baseball team,^[5] and a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. After Yale, he joined Darlington School serving on the Upper School history department.^[7] He attended Harvard Law School, receiving his J.D. in 2005.^[8]

Military service

DeSantis received his Reserve Naval officer's commission and assignment to Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) in 2004 at the U.S. Naval Reserve Center in Dallas, Texas, while still a student at Harvard Law School. He completed U.S. Naval Justice School in 2005. Later that year, he received orders to the Trial Service Office Command South East at Naval Station Mayport, Florida, as a JAG prosecutor. In 2006, he was promoted from lieutenant junior grade (LTJG) to lieutenant (LT). He worked for the commander of Joint Task Force-Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO), working directly with detainees at the Guantanamo Bay Joint Detention Facility.^{[9][10][11]}

In 2007, DeSantis reported to the Naval Special Warfare Command Group in Coronado, California, where he was assigned to SEAL Team One and deployed to Iraq^[12] with the troop surge as the Legal Advisor to the SEAL Commander, Special Operations Task Force-West in Fallujah.^{[9][10][11]}

He returned to the United States in April 2008, at which time he was reassigned to the Naval Region Southeast Legal Service. He was appointed by the U.S. Department of Justice to serve as a federal prosecutor^[12] at the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Florida. DeSantis was assigned as a trial defense counsel until his honorable discharge from active duty in February 2010. He concurrently accepted a reserve commission as a lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General Corps of the US Navy Reserve.^[13] He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Iraq Campaign Medal.^{[9][10][11]}

Writing

He authored a book entitled *Dreams From Our Founding Fathers: First Principles in the Age of Obama*, which was published in 2011.^[13] His writing has appeared in *National Review*, *The Washington Times*, *The American Spectator*, *Human Events*, and *American Thinker*.^[13]

U.S. House of Representatives

2012 election

In 2012, DeSantis announced he would run in the Republican primary for the 6th District. The district had previously been the 7th, represented by 10-term Republican John Mica. However, Mica's share of Orlando had been drawn into the new 7th District, and Mica opted to run there even though the new 6th included the bulk of his former territory.

DeSantis won the six-candidate Republican primary with 39% of the vote, with the runner-up, state representative Fred Costello, obtaining 23%.^[14] In the November general election, DeSantis defeated Democratic candidate Heather Beaven by 57–43%, with majorities in all four counties.^[15]

Committee assignments

Prior to the 114th United States Congress, DeSantis was named the chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security.^[16]

- **Committee on Foreign Affairs**

- Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
- Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

- **Committee on the Judiciary**

- Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice
 - Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet

- **Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

- Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and the Census
 - Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs

- **Republican Study Committee**^[17]

Legislation

On January 29, 2014, DeSantis introduced into the House the Faithful Execution of the Law Act of 2014 (H.R. 3973; 113th Congress), a bill that would direct the United States Department of Justice to report to the United States Congress whenever any federal agency refrains from enforcing laws or regulations for any reason.^{[18][19]} In the report, the government would have to explain why it had decided not to enforce that law.^[20] DeSantis spoke in favor of the bill, arguing that "President Obama has not only failed to uphold several of our nation's laws, he has vowed to continue to do so in order to enact his unpopular agenda. ...The American people deserve to know exactly which laws the Obama administration is refusing to enforce and why."^[20] The bill did not become law.

In 2013, DeSantis signed a pledge sponsored by the Libertarian PAC founded by billionaires Charles Koch and David Koch, Americans for Prosperity, promising to vote against any global warming legislation that would raise taxes.^[21]

On August 24, 2017, DeSantis added a rider to the proposed fiscal 2018 spending bill package that would end funding for the Mueller investigation "or for the investigation under that order of matters occurring before June 2015" (the month Trump announced he was running for president) 180 days after passage of the bill.^[22] The amendment was intended to counter a bipartisan bill written by two Democratic and two Republican U.S. senators, which was intended to limit the president's power to fire the special counsel. The DeSantis amendment sought to cut off funding for the investigation by November 2017. It was also a response to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's statement that the DOJ, "doesn't conduct fishing expeditions." DeSantis stated that the May 17, 2017 DOJ order "didn't identify a crime to be investigated and practically invites a fishing expedition."^[23]

He was a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, a group of congressional conservatives and libertarians.^{[11][24][25]}

2016 U.S. Senate candidacy

On May 6, 2015, DeSantis announced that he was running for the United States Senate seat held by Marco Rubio, who initially did not file to run for re-election due to his bid for the U.S. presidency.^[26] He was endorsed by the fiscally conservative Club for Growth.^[27] DeSantis withdrew and instead campaigned for re-election to the House once Rubio entered the Senate race after ending his presidential bid.

Governor of Florida

Election

In January 2018, DeSantis announced his candidacy for governor of Florida to succeed term-limited Republican incumbent Rick Scott. President Donald Trump stated in December 2017 that he would support DeSantis should he run for governor.^[28] During the Republican primary, DeSantis emphasized his support for Trump by running an ad where DeSantis taught his children how to "build the wall" and say "Make America Great Again" and by dressing one of his children in a tiny red "Make America Great Again" jumper.^[29] Asked if he could name an issue where he disagreed with Trump, DeSantis did not identify a single issue.^[30] On July 30, 2018, Jonathan Martin of *The New York Times* wrote that the support DeSantis's primary campaign had received demonstrated both Trump's kingmaking capacity in a Republican-trending state but also a "broader nationalization of conservative politics" wherein "a willingness to hurl rhetorical lightning bolts at the left, the media and special counsel Robert S. Mueller can override local credentials, local endorsements and preparedness for a state-based job."^[30]



DeSantis and his wife, Casey, with President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump in February 2019

On August 28, 2018, DeSantis won the Republican primary. His Democratic opponent in the general election was Andrew Gillum.^[31] The race was "widely seen as a toss-up".^[32]

In September 2018, DeSantis announced state representative Jeanette Núñez as his running mate.^[33] He resigned his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives on September 10, 2018, to focus on his gubernatorial candidacy.^[34] That same month, DeSantis was criticized for not having a fully formed policy platform for his gubernatorial campaign.^[35] He canceled a planned interview with the *Tampa Bay Times* to have additional time to put together a platform before an in-depth policy interview.^[35]

DeSantis was endorsed by the Florida Police Chiefs Association in his 2018 campaign.^[36] In the campaign, some sheriffs endorsed DeSantis, while other sheriffs backed Gillum.^[37]

Platform

DeSantis's gubernatorial platform includes support for legislation that would allow persons with concealed weapons permits to carry firearms openly.^[38] He also supports a law mandating the use of E-Verify by businesses and a state-level ban on sanctuary city protections for undocumented immigrants.^[38] DeSantis has promised to stop the spread of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee.^[38] DeSantis has also expressed support for a state constitutional amendment to require a supermajority vote for any tax increases.^[39] He opposes allowing able-bodied, childless adults to receive Medicaid.^[39] DeSantis has stated that he would implement a medical marijuana program, but opposes the legalization of recreational marijuana.^{[39][40][41]}

"Monkey this up" controversy

On August 29, 2018, DeSantis came under criticism for comments that were allegedly racist, saying, "The last thing we need to do is to monkey this up by trying to embrace a socialist agenda with huge tax increases and bankrupting the state. That is not going to work. That's not going to be good for Florida."^[42] DeSantis was accused of using the verb "monkey" as a racist dog whistle; his opponent, Gillum, was African-American.^[43] Amid the controversy over DeSantis' comments, *The Washington*

Post and the Naples Daily News reported that DeSantis had on four occasions appeared at racially-charged conferences at the David Horowitz Freedom Center that featured various right-wing provocateurs as speakers.^{[44][45]} DeSantis stated that his comment had "zero to do with race".^[46]

Results

Initial election-night results had DeSantis winning by nearly 100,000 votes, and Gillum conceded.^[47] Gillum took back his concession as late-counted ballots brought the race within less than 34,000 votes, a margin of 0.4%. The close margin required an automatic machine recount of the ballots.^[48]

A machine recount in three statewide contests (governor, U.S. senator, and agriculture commissioner) began with a deadline of November 15, 2018. Although three counties missed the deadline, it was not extended.^{[49][50]} DeSantis was confirmed as the winner and Gillum conceded on November 17.^[51]

Tenure

DeSantis prefiled the oath of office with the Florida Secretary of State and became governor at midnight, January 8, 2019.^[52] The official swearing in ceremony was held at noon that day. On January 11, 2019, DeSantis posthumously pardoned the Groveland Four, four black men falsely convicted of rape in 1949.^[53] That same day, DeSantis officially suspended Broward County sheriff Scott Israel for his response to the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. DeSantis appointed Gregory Tony as sheriff of Broward County. On May 2, 2020, Sheriff Tony admitted to withholding a murder arrest from DeSantis during the vetting process.^[54]

In his first two weeks in office, DeSantis appointed Barbara Lagoa, Robert J. Luck and Carlos G. Muñiz to fill the three vacancies on the Florida Supreme Court, shifting the court from having a liberal to a conservative majority. He replaced the entire South Florida Water Management District board. He signed \$2.5 billion executive order for water quality and Everglades restoration work.^[55] He created a chief science officer position and created an office of coastal protection and resilience.^[56] In January 2019, DeSantis signed an executive order calling for the end of Common Core in Florida.^[57]

DeSantis encouraged Florida sheriffs to cooperate with the federal government on immigration-related issues.^[58] In June 2019, DeSantis signed an anti-sanctuary city bill that requires law enforcement "to honor U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainers for undocumented immigrants who are arrested or convicted" of crimes.^{[59][60][61][62]} Florida became the 12th state to ban sanctuary cities.^[63]

In June 2019, DeSantis signed a measure that would make it harder to launch successful ballot initiatives. Petition-gathering for ballot initiatives to legalize medical marijuana, increases to the minimum wage, and expansion of Medicaid were also under way.^{[64][65][66]}

In June 2019, following on the heels of a 2018 constitutional amendment referendum in favor of voting rights restoration for felons, DeSantis signed legislation that restricted such restoration only to those felons who had fully paid back all fees and fines to the courts, a move that was criticized as reminiscent of poll taxes in the Jim Crow South and prompted a lawsuit.^[67]



DeSantis with Attorney General Ashley Moody, Chief Finance Officer Jimmy Patronis, and Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried in 2019

On August 28, 2019, DeSantis declared a state of emergency for 26 counties in Hurricane Dorian's expected path.^[68] This later expanded to the entire state on August 29.

In March 2020 DeSantis decided against declaring a state of emergency in Florida during the COVID-19 pandemic.^{[69][70]}

Following conflict between North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper and President Trump concerning the 2020 Republican National Convention originally intended to be held in Charlotte, but consequently jeopardized following Cooper's rejection of large scale festivities to be held due to COVID-19 concerns, DeSantis campaigned to have Florida be made the new host state.^[71] DeSantis was in competition with Tennessee and Georgia, however he ultimately won out and the main festivities of the RNC, including the keynote speech of Trump's, were rescheduled to be held in Jacksonville.^{[72][73]}

On June 30, 2020, DeSantis signed a bill requiring government employers and private companies that contract with the government to use E-Verify.^{[74][75][76]} DeSantis had originally called for all employers to be required to use it.^[77]

From July through September 2020 DeSantis was in a legal battle with State Representative Geraldine Thompson. The prior November President Trump appointed the aforementioned Lagoa and Luck to the Federal Eleventh Circuit. On January 23, 2020 the Supreme Court Judicial Nominating Commission certified a list of nominees to him, and under the Florida Constitution he had until March 23 to make his appointments. Citing COVID delays he made the appointments of John D. Couriel and Renatha Francis on May 26, but Francis was short of the ten year Bar membership requirement. DeSantis planned on withholding her commission until she reached ten years but Thompson sued, and the Supreme Court ruled that he had to appoint a nominee who was eligible on March 23.^[78] DeSantis subsequently appointed Jamie Grosshans instead.^[79]

Political positions

DeSantis is a conservative.^{[80][81][82]} He was endorsed by the Family Research Council Action PAC in 2015.^[83]



DeSantis speaking at the Hudson Institute in June 2015

Marijuana

DeSantis supports the implementation of a medical marijuana program in Florida, but opposes the legalization of recreational marijuana.^{[39][40][41][84]} He voted against the Veterans Equal Access Amendment that would give veterans access to medical marijuana if recommended by their Veterans Health Administration doctor and if it is legal for medicinal purposes in their state of residence.^[85]

Contraceptives and abortion

DeSantis opposes abortion^[86] and has denounced Planned Parenthood.^[87]

DeSantis agreed with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, saying "This case does not concern the availability or legality of contraceptives, and individuals can obtain and use these as they see fit. The question is simply whether the government can force the owners of Hobby Lobby to pay for abortifacients in violation of their faith."^[88]

Economy

DeSantis has said that the debate in Washington, D.C., over how to reduce the deficit should shift emphasis from tax increases to curtailing spending and triggering economic growth.^[89] He supports a "no budget no pay" policy for Congress to encourage the passage of a budget.^[90] He believes the Federal Reserve System should be audited.^[91]

In the wake of the alleged IRS targeting controversy, DeSantis called for the resignation of Internal Revenue Service commissioner John Koskinen for having "failed the American people by frustrating Congress's attempts to ascertain the truth."^{[92][93]} He co-sponsored a bill to impeach Koskinen for violating the public's trust.^[94] In 2015, DeSantis was named "Taxpayer Superhero" by Citizens Against Government Waste, a conservative think-tank.^[95]

DeSantis supported the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act, which would require that regulations that have a significant economic impact be subject to a vote of Congress prior to taking effect.^[96]

DeSantis introduced the Let Seniors Work Act, which would repeal the Retirement Earnings Test and exempt senior citizens from the 12.4% Social Security payroll tax, and he co-sponsored a measure to eliminate taxes on Social Security benefits.^[97]

DeSantis sponsored the Transportation Empowerment Act, which would transfer much of the responsibility for transportation projects to the individual states and sharply reduce the federal gas tax.^{[98][99]}

DeSantis has opposed legislation to require online retailers to collect and pay state sales tax.^[100]

He voted in favor of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.^[101] DeSantis says the bill will bring a "dramatically lower tax rate" and "full expensing of capital investments." DeSantis also believes the act will bring more jobs to America.^[102]

Education

DeSantis opposes federal education programs such as No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top, saying that education policy should be made at the local level.^[91]

In 2016, DeSantis introduced the Higher Education Reform and Opportunity Act, which would allow states to create their own accreditation systems. In an op-ed for the National Review, DeSantis said that his legislation would give students "access to federal loan money to put towards non-traditional educational opportunities, such as online learning courses, vocational schools, and apprenticeships in skilled trades."^[103]

Foreign relations

Cuba

In 2015, DeSantis introduced the Guantanamo Bay Recidivism Prevention Act, which would cut off foreign aid to countries that receive detainees if they show back up on the terrorism recidivism list.^[104]

DeSantis opposed President Obama's plan to shut down the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, saying "Bringing hardened terrorists to the U.S. homeland harms our national security."^[105]

Regarding the formal restart of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, DeSantis said "Raising the Cuban flag in the United States is a slap in the face to those who have experienced the brutality of the Castro regime."^[106]

Iran

DeSantis opposed the Iran nuclear deal framework, calling it "a bad deal that will significantly degrade our national security."^[107]

DeSantis said "the Iran deal gives Ayatollah Khamenei exactly what he wants: billions of dollars in sanctions relief, validation of the Iranian nuclear program, and the ability to stymie inspections."^[108]



DeSantis watches as President Donald Trump delivers remarks to the Venezuelan American community in February 2019

During a line of questioning, DeSantis told Secretary of State John Kerry that the executive branch had a legal obligation to provide Congress with the details behind any side deals made between world leaders and Iran.^[109] DeSantis accused President Barack Obama of giving better treatment of Cuba's Raul Castro and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei than of Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu.^[110]

Israel

In 2013, DeSantis introduced the Palestinian Accountability Act, which would halt U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority until it formally recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and cuts off all ties with the militant group Hamas.^[111]

In 2016, DeSantis co-introduced the Non-Discrimination of Israel in Labeling Act, which will defend the right of Israeli producers to label products manufactured in the West Bank as "Israel," "Made in Israel," or "Product of Israel."^[112] DeSantis supported the move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.^[113]



DeSantis with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 2019

As governor, in light of Airbnb's decision to no longer allow rentals of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, on January 15, 2019, DeSantis directed the Department of Management Services to no longer reimburse state employees and state contractors for travel expenses incurred with Airbnb;^[114] later that month he accepted the recommendation of the State Board of Administration to place Airbnb on Florida's "Scrutinized Companies List".^[115]

Government

DeSantis opted not to receive his congressional pension, and he filed a measure that would eliminate pensions for members of Congress.^[91] After introducing the End Pensions in Congress Act, DeSantis said "The Founding Fathers envisioned elected officials as part of a servant class, yet Washington has evolved into a ruling class culture."^[116]

DeSantis supports a constitutional amendment to impose term limits for members of Congress, so that representatives would be limited to three terms and senators to two terms.^[117]

Gun law

DeSantis opposes gun control. He received an A+ rating from the National Rifle Association.^[118] He is generally opposed to firearm regulation, saying, "Very rarely do firearms restrictions affect criminals. They really only affect law-abiding citizens."^[119]

Following the 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, DeSantis expressed his support for hiring retired law enforcement officers and military veterans as armed guards for schools.^[120] He disagrees with legislation signed into law by Florida governor Rick Scott that banned bump stocks, added a mandatory three-day waiting period for gun purchases, and raised the legal age for purchases from 18 to 21.^[10] He has expressed support for measures to improve federal background checks for purchasing firearms and has said that there is a need to intervene with those who are exhibiting warning signs of committing violence instead of waiting until a crime has been committed.^[120]

Healthcare

DeSantis is opposed to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.^{[121][122]} He has called for the "full and complete repeal" of the act.^[121]

In March 2017, DeSantis said that he wasn't ready to support the American Health Care Act, the House Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.^[123] He did vote for the May 2017 Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.^{[124][125]}

COVID-19 pandemic

DeSantis's handling of the coronavirus pandemic was harshly criticized.^[126] According to public health experts, politics dictated the response to the coronavirus in Florida, rather than science.^[126] DeSantis rejected the implementation of a statewide face mask mandate, belatedly implemented stay-at-home orders, and let his stay-at-home order implemented in April expire.^[126] In July 2020, as Florida had become a global epicenter of the coronavirus, with nearly 5,800 deaths, DeSantis had largely sidelined health experts and scientists, with *The Washington Post* reporting that DeSantis primarily relied on his wife, a former television reporter, and his chief of staff, a former hospital executive.^[126]

Early in the coronavirus pandemic, DeSantis boasted about the low number of coronavirus cases in Florida, and harshly criticized those who had argued that the state's lax response to the coronavirus was insufficient.^{[126][127]} Experts argued that delays in lockdown would greatly increase Florida's coronavirus numbers and leave it susceptible to becoming a new hotspot.^[128] By the end of March 2020, Florida had 6,741 confirmed cases of COVID-19. DeSantis declared that he would not issue a statewide stay-at-home order because the Trump administration had not recommended that he do so.^[129] Then, on April 1, DeSantis ordered that all Floridians stay home for 30 days with exceptions for essential services and activities.^[130] DeSantis received criticism for stating on April 9 that he believed that no fatalities under 25 had been caused in the United States by COVID-19, despite this being false. DeSantis acknowledged this error after critics pointed it out, and clarified that there have been no deaths from the coronavirus in

people under 25 in Florida.^{[131][132]} In early June, DeSantis partially lifted his stay-at-home order, lifting restrictions on bars and cinemas; on the same day that he lifted the restrictions, Florida recorded the largest coronavirus case surge in six weeks.^[126]

DeSantis sought to have the 2020 Republican National Convention in Jacksonville, Florida. In conversations with President Trump in May, DeSantis said he would not require the use of face masks.^[126] However, by July, as Florida became a global epicenter of the coronavirus, Trump called off the event in Jacksonville.^[126]

In June 2020, DeSantis came under increased scrutiny after a surge in COVID-19 cases, which started approximately four weeks after Florida initiated the reopening process. DeSantis said that the bulk of new cases were present in "younger cohorts," and argued that an increase in testing, particularly of asymptomatic individuals, and more efficient identification of outbreaks in areas such as prisons and in Florida's agriculture sector were responsible for the majority of the increases. He emphasized that the strain on the hospital system and medical supplies such as ventilators had decreased since the prior "peak" in case numbers, and that Florida was ready to handle any additional influx in hospital patients; adding that the state had "twice as many" open hospital beds than on March 1. Amid calls on DeSantis to re-instate restrictions on business activity in late June to halt the spread of the coronavirus, DeSantis said Florida is "not going back" on reopening the economy, arguing that "people going to a business is not what's driving" the surge in coronavirus cases.^[133]

Starting June 2020, Florida experienced a resurgence of COVID-19 cases, nearly tripling the percent positive rate of tests for COVID-19 in a span of three weeks. On June 28, 2020, DeSantis said Florida was in "good shape" in its fight against COVID-19,^[134] despite Florida having the sixth most confirmed COVID-19 cases in the nation as of that date.^[135]

Florida had the third most confirmed COVID-19 cases and the most active cases in the nation as of July 19, 2020, becoming a global epicenter of the coronavirus.^{[136][126]} However, as of September 3, 2020, the mortality rate in Florida remains considerably lower than in other states. For example, Florida has seen roughly 53 deaths for every 100,000 residents, compared to over 160 deaths per 100,000 residents in New York.^[137]

Immigration

DeSantis was a critic of President Obama's immigration policies; he opposed Obama's deferred action programs (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) and accused him of failing to enforce immigration laws.^{[138][139]} DeSantis opposes "sanctuary cities."^[140] He is a co-sponsor of the Establishing Mandatory Minimums for Illegal Reentry Act of 2015, also known as Kate's Law, which would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties applicable to aliens who unlawfully reenter the United States after being removed.^[141] In 2017, DeSantis spoke at ACT! for America, an anti-Muslim advocacy group.^[142]

After the November 2015 Paris attacks, DeSantis "called for urgent recognition that Islamic extremism is to blame for the Paris attacks and should be seen as an enemy for America." DeSantis has said "The enemy is an ideology rooted in militant Islam" and has said that ISIS must be stopped and its members kept away from America.^[143] Regarding U.S. policy toward refugees, DeSantis said "the prudent policy is to err on the side of protecting the American people".^[144]

LGBT issues

DeSantis has a "o" rating from the Human Rights Campaign based on his record of voting on LGBT-related issues and legislation.^[145] In 2018, he told the *Sun Sentinel* he "doesn't want any discrimination in Florida, I want people to be able to live their life, whether you're gay or whether you're religious."^[146]

In January 2019, less than a week after taking office, DeSantis issued a nondiscrimination order for state employees reiterating former governor Scott's order; while the order included race, age, sex, color, religion, national origin, marital status and disability, it included no protections for sexual orientation or gender identity. Equality Florida strongly criticized DeSantis, with the organization's senior political director stating that Equality Florida was "deeply disappointed to see that LGBTQ employees and contractors have been left out of the governor's executive order."^[147] DeSantis's predecessor had pledged to sign an LGBT-inclusive order as governor, but ultimately did not follow through on the grounds that proper federal protections existed.^[148]

In June 2019, DeSantis' office issued a proclamation honoring the victims of the June 12, 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting at the Pulse gay bar and nightclub in Orlando, where 49 people were killed and 50 others were injured by Omar Mateen. The proclamation did not include any reference to the LGBT community, sparking severe criticism and accusations that the governor intentionally omitted the category from the message; Democratic state representatives Anna Eskamani and Carlos Guillermo Smith, who is openly gay, lambasted the governor, while gun control activist Fred Guttenberg, whose daughter was killed in a school shooting in Broward County a year earlier, questioned if the omission was predetermined. DeSantis reissued the proclamation with revisions including mentions of the LGBT community, and a spokesperson stated that the omission was due to an error on the part of DeSantis' staff. Former Governor Scott included an LGBT reference in a prior Pulse memorial message.^[149]

Russia investigation

According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, DeSantis "made a name for himself [in 2017] attacking special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election."^[150]

DeSantis proposed an amendment that would halt funding for Mueller's 2017 Special Counsel investigation probe six months after the amendment's passage.^[151] In addition, this provision would prohibit Mueller from investigating matters that occurred before June 2015, when Trump launched his presidential campaign.^[152] In December 2017, DeSantis asserted that if there was any evidence of collusion between members of the Trump campaign and Russian officials, it would already have been leaked.^[153]

In January 2018, while on the House Intelligence Committee, DeSantis voted on party lines to release a classified memo authored by Republicans on the committee which purported to show that the FBI abused its surveillance powers in the Russia investigation.^[154] DeSantis voted not to release a memo authored by Democrats on the committee which accused the Republicans on the committee of playing politics with national security.^[154] Democrats described the Republican-authored memo as grossly distorted and intended to discredit the Mueller Special Counsel investigation, and said that the Republicans on the committee had begun an investigation into the FBI and DOJ.^[154]

In April 2018, DeSantis called on FBI director Christopher Wray to criminally investigate a number of officials involved in investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election, including former FBI director James Comey, former acting director of the FBI Andrew McCabe, FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI counsel Lisa Page.^[155] DeSantis also called for investigations of a number of former Obama officials, including Loretta Lynch and Hillary Clinton.^[156]

On October 10, 2019, a spokesman for DeSantis announced that he would be "returning a political contribution he received from two Soviet-born businessmen, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, through their company Global Energy Producers. Parnas and Fruman are accused of funneling foreign cash into U.S. elections to increase their influence and promote their business interests; they are central figures in the Trump-Ukraine scandal and impeachment inquiry. "They made the donation a day before Trump tweeted his 'full endorsement' of DeSantis."^[157]

Veterans

DeSantis has sharply criticized the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the Veterans Health Administration scandal of 2014, in which veteran deaths were linked to wait times. He co-sponsored the VA Accountability Act, which aims to increase accountability by providing for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct.^{[158][159]} He is a member of the Post-9/11 Veterans Caucus.^[160] DeSantis worked with a Marine Corps veteran of Afghanistan, Cole Lyle, and a non-profit in his district, K9s for Warriors, to advance the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Act of 2016^[161]. The bill sought to expand veteran access to service dogs as a form of treatment for Post Traumatic Stress at the VA. The bill did not pass in the 115th Congress, but a modified version passed the House of Representatives in 2019.^{[162][163]}

Voting rights

As of August 2018, DeSantis had not taken a position on a November 2018 ballot initiative on the restoration of voting rights for felons.^{[164][165]}

Law enforcement

DeSantis called for Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel to resign after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Israel was accused by a large number of people of running his department poorly and not properly handling or responding to the shooting. DeSantis stated that had he been governor when the shooting occurred he would have removed Israel from his position.^{[166][167]} On January 11, shortly after taking office as governor, DeSantis suspended Israel from his duties. Israel declared that he intends to contest his suspension.^[167]

Personal life

DeSantis is a Roman Catholic^[168] and of Italian descent. In 2010, he married Casey Black. They lived in Ponte Vedra Beach, near St. Augustine until Ponte Vedra Beach was drawn into the neighboring 4th district. DeSantis and his wife then moved to Palm Coast, north of Daytona Beach.^{[169][170]} DeSantis and his wife have two daughters and a son.^[171]



Ron and Casey DeSantis in January 2019

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External links

- official Florida Governor website (<https://www.flgov.com/>)
- Campaign website (<https://rondesantis.com/>)
- Ron DeSantis (https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Florida/Government/Federal/US_House/Ron_Desantis_%5BR-06%5D) at Curlie

- [Appearances](https://www.c-span.org/person/?rondesantis) (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?rondesantis>) on C-SPAN
- [Biography](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000621) (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000621>) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
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- [Legislation sponsored](https://www.congress.gov/member/ron-desantis/D000621) (<https://www.congress.gov/member/ron-desantis/D000621>) at the Library of Congress

U.S. House of Representatives		
Preceded by Cliff Stearns	Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida's 6th congressional district 2013–2018	Succeeded by Michael Waltz
Party political offices		
Preceded by Rick Scott	Republican nominee for Governor of Florida 2018	Most recent
Political offices		
Preceded by Rick Scott	Governor of Florida 2019–present	Incumbent
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by Mike Pence as Vice President	Order of Precedence of the United States Within Florida	Succeeded by Mayor of city in which event is held
		Succeeded by Otherwise Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the US House of Representatives
Preceded by Gretchen Whitmer as Governor of Michigan	Order of Precedence of the United States Outside Florida	Succeeded by Greg Abbott as Governor of Texas

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